

CLAIMS

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1. An electronic device comprising:
a housing having at least one outside edge;
at least one touchpad disposed along at least a portion of the at least one
outside edge; and
a user input detector, electrically coupled to the touchpad, for detecting
user input from the touchpad along at least a portion of the outside edge.

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2. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the touchpad extends
substantially about a perimeter along the at least one outside edge.

3. The electronic device of claim 2, wherein the perimeter is rounded.

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4. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the user input detector
comprises capacitive sensing technology for detecting user input.

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5. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the touchpad comprises at least
one of a distinctive shape and texture, for providing a tactile feedback to the
user.

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6. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the housing comprises at least one of: a keyboard, a computer, and a display.

7. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein a sliding contact with the touchpad causes an adjustment of a variable.

8. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the electronic device has at least one outside corner edge and the touchpad is disposed about the at least one outside corner edge.

9. The electronic device of claim 8, wherein the outside corner edge is rounded.

10. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the housing comprises a display having a display screen.

11. The electronic device of claim 10, wherein the at least one outside edge is located about at least one edge of the display, and the touchpad is disposed along at least a portion of the at least one edge of the display.

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12. The electronic device of claim 10, further comprising a primary input device for controlling a pointer in the display, wherein the touchpad serves as a secondary input device for controlling at least one of the following: scrolling, zooming, three-dimensional manipulation, slider control, and adjusting a variable.

13. The electronic device of claim 10, wherein a sliding contact with the touchpad causes at least one of the following manipulations of objects displayed on the display screen: scrolling, zooming, three-dimensional manipulation, pointer movement, slider control, and adjustment of a variable.

14. The electronic device of claim 10, wherein a sliding contact with the touchpad along one outside edge provides one dimensional control of objects displayed on the display screen.

15. The electronic device of claim 10, wherein a plurality of touchpads are disposed along at least a portion of a plurality of outside edges and each touchpad controls movement in one of at least two different one-dimensional axes, whereby user input provided along a plurality of touchpads provides multi-dimensional manipulation of objects displayed on the display screen.

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16. The electronic device of claim 15, wherein two touchpads are disposed along at least a portion of two outside edges and each touchpad controls movement in one of two different one-dimensional axes, whereby user input provided along the two touchpads provides multi-dimensional manipulation of objects displayed on the display screen.

17. The electronic device of claim 15, wherein the multi-dimensional manipulation of objects comprises two-dimensional manipulation.

18. The electronic device of claim 15, wherein the multi-dimensional manipulation of objects comprises three-dimensional manipulation.

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19. A method comprising the steps of:
touching about the outside edge of a housing;
detecting the touching; and
transmitting an electrical signal upon detecting the touching to a control
5 circuit, wherein the control circuit acts upon the electrical signal.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of touching is substantially
about a perimeter along the outside edge.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of touching comprises sliding
10 along the outside edge.

22. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
transmitting an output signal from the control circuit to a graphical display;
15 and
navigating within the display in accordance with the output signal.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein the housing comprises at least two
outside edges and the step of touching comprises using two hands to provide
20 dual sliding contacts along at least two different outside edges.

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25. A touchpad input device comprising:
a touchpad disposed along at least a portion of at least one outside edge
of a housing;
a user input detector, electrically coupled to the touchpad, for detecting
5 user input from the touchpad and transmitting input signals; and
a control circuit electrically coupled to the user input detector; wherein the
control circuit acts upon the input signals from the user input detector.

10 26. The touchpad input device of claim 25, further comprising a display
electrically coupled to the control circuit wherein the control circuit transmits
output signals to the display.

15 27. The touchpad input device of claim 26, wherein the display is within the
housing and the at least one outside edge is located about at least one edge of
the display, and the touchpad is disposed along at least a portion of the at least
one edge of the display.

20 28. The touchpad input device of claim 25, wherein the touchpad extends
substantially about a perimeter along the at least one outside edge.

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29. The touchpad input device of claim 25 wherein the user input detector comprises capacitive sensing technology for detecting user input.

30. The touchpad input device of claim 25 wherein the touchpad comprises at least one of a distinctive shape and texture, for providing a tactile feedback to the user.

31. The touchpad input device of claim 25, further comprising an analog-to-digital converter electrically coupled between the user input detector and the control circuit for converting electrical signals into digital information readable by the control circuit.

32. The touchpad input device of claim 25, further comprising a threshold comparator electrically coupled between the user input detector and the control circuit.

33. The touchpad input device of claim 25, further comprising an electric signal amplifier electrically coupled between the user input detector and the control circuit.

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34. The touchpad input device of claim 25, wherein the touchpad comprises a strip disposed along at least a portion of at least one outside edge of the housing for detecting user input along the strip.

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